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THE NEW YEAR'S SHOOT

by

Arthur Palmer Hudson

From about the middle of the eighteenth century the Piedmont section of North Carolina centering in the counties of Forsyth, Rowan, and Cabarrus, and lying in the basins of the Yadkin and the Catawba Rivers, received a considerable infusion of Moravians, Rhinelanders, and other German-speaking stock. A few of these settlers came directly from Europe; most of them came down the valleys from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia in families or settlements. Some of their folklore has been recorded in Miss Adelaide Fries' numerous studies of Moravian church and cultural history and in Dr. Carl Hammer's *Rhinelanders on the Yadkin* (Salisbury, N. C., 1943). A few special features, chiefly the beautiful Easter morning sunrise service at Winston-Salem, have attracted nation-wide attention and drawn numerous pilgrims to the region. But except for fragments preserved in the memories of very old people, it would appear that this folklore has not survived in verbal forms.

One custom, however, is still traditionally current in a picturesque form and is accompanied by something like a folksong in English. This is "The New Year's Shoot," with its rimed greeting and good wish delivered by "The Speech Crier." Though apparently very old, it would appear to be still vigorous, in Cleveland and Gaston Counties at least. It has been excellently described, in an account to be quoted below.

From Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (3rd ed., 1915, Part VI, p. 164) we learn: "On New Year's Eve, which is Saint Sylvester's Day, Bohemian lads, armed with guns, form themselves into circles and fire thrice in the air. This is called 'Shooting the Witches' and is supposed to frighten witches away." According to the great encyclopedic authority on German folklore, *Handwörterbuch des deut-*

schen Aberglaubens (VII, 1066): "On Sylvester's Eve and on New Year's Day, throughout the land, over fields and plains, in the orchards, and on the streets of cities, there is brisk shooting, with the idea of 'shooting the old year out and shooting the new year in' and of greeting and complimenting sweethearts and neighbors. Refreshments from the honorees follow as a matter of course."

In Edwin Miller Fogel's *Beliefs and Superstitions of the Pennsylvania Germans* (Philadelphia, 1915, p. 208), the custom of shooting into fruit trees on New Year's Eve is recorded in the form of a proverb, "*Bem drage net wammerne net Neijor a schisst* (Fruit trees will not bear unless they are wassailed on New Year's Eve)," with English analogues from Sussex and Devonshire. Dr. George F. Horner, of Chapel Hill, N. C., who grew up in York County, Pennsylvania, where the population is predominantly of German descent, recalls that the custom of "*Kallathumpian*" (*Kalaschetrompeten*?) was still common there during his boyhood. This consisted of going around to neighbors' houses on New Year's Eve and firing guns.

Among the pious Moravians of North Carolina, the celebration of New Year's Eve was a solemn and deeply religious ceremony. A typical account is that recorded in the Salem Diary, begun in 1771 by the Rev. Richard Utley and published in Adelaide Fries' *Records of the Moravians of North Carolina* (North Carolina Historical Commission Publications, 3 vols., Raleigh, 1922, I, 447). In the entry for December 31, 1771, it is noted that the evening services were in three sections: (1) a lovefeast, with the singing of hymns and carols and the reading of memorabilia of certain European congregations; (2) the reading of memorabilia of various Pennsylvania and local congregations; and (3), beginning at 11:30 p.m., the singing of a hymn, "O du, des Güte kein Muss ausspricht," then an address. "When the coming of the New Year was announced by the trombones, with the tune 'Now thank we all our God,' the congregation knelt . . . and prayed."

Meanwhile, the less pious were celebrating in the old Bohemian and German way. The Friedberg Diary, kept by the Rev. Ludolf Bachhof, and named after a schoolhouse near Old Salem belonging to the "*Society unter der Ens*, called South Fork," records for 1774:

"Jan. 1. Having opened the new year with singing 'Now thank we all our God,' we went to our homes, and would have liked to rest, but a crowd of the young men and older boys of that section went about from farm to farm 'shooting in' the year. They did not come to

the School House, but we heard the shooting until sunrise, and one might have thought the whole neighborhood was full of Indians. All who came to the noon meeting had much to say about what a noisy night it was, and how they had been disturbed." (Fries, *op. cit.*, II, 336-337)

The following account of "The New Year's Shoot" as it is still practiced in Gaston and Cleveland Counties suggests that, of the original motivating ideas behind it,—scaring witches, invoking fertility, and well-wishing,—only the last has survived in the consciousness of its practitioners. The accompanying "Speech" of the "Speech Crier" is an especially interesting feature of the North Carolina custom. Such is not mentioned in accounts of the Bohemian, the German, and the Pennsylvania German practices. So far as the present writer knows, it has only one recorded American parallel, to be discussed later. The "Speech" itself would seem to be a genuine specimen of folk poetry. Curiously enough, it imparts to the custom as it is described a religious tone, of which both the participants and the reporter were conscious, and this is not entirely antithetical to the primitive idea of driving away evil spirits and, perhaps, of invoking fertility for orchards and fields.

The report is from W. Kays Gary, in the *Greensboro* (N. C.) *Daily News*, January 6, 1946, section 2, p. 1.

"Over in Cherryville, Cleveland County, they have a method of celebrating the arrival of the new year that is probably the oldest and certainly the most unique in the country. They call it 'The New Year's Shoot,' when all the descendants of this German settlement's oldest families get together with 'muzzle-loaders' over 100 years old and for 18 continuous hours blast out explosive greetings to the new year.

"This tradition is known to be 150 years old and perhaps older. No one knows. It was going on when the grandfathers of Cherryville's oldest citizens were in knee pants. For a very particular reason it has never been highly publicized. That was because a radio engineer was heard to remark, 'Who in hell wants to hear an old gun over the radio?' when the shooters were all set for a broadcast. They wouldn't fire a shot after that and the radio station was left in the lurch.

"When this reporter first heard of the celebration on New Year's Eve he clattered over to Cherryville just before midnight and found some 25 or 30 field-clad

men leaning against Civil War muskets, squirting tobacco juice, smoking cigars, and waiting for their 'H' hour. When the reporter's mission was made known, 'Uncle' A. Sidney Beam came over and introduced himself as 'The Speech Crier.' When asked about his part in the celebration, Uncle Sidney said he had chanted the 'New Year's Speech' for 57 years hand-running and that the reporter would hear it later.

"Came the stroke of midnight, and a blast that must rival that of a bomb lifted the reporter's hat and plopped it in the mud. Everybody howled, and the 'shoot' was on. Piling into cars, carrying the reporter in the rush, the crowd headed for the country, stopping several minutes later at a home on a wooded hill known as 'the Carpenter place.' It was then that Uncle Sid called out the names of the house's occupants and launched into his New Year's chant. It sounded weird and great and beautiful—like something out of old England. . . ."

Mr. Gary quotes a part of the "Speech." The following is a complete version supplied to me by Mr. Beam himself, adding, in a postscript, "I am having a record made and I will send you one. The speech is mean[ing]less unless you hear it."

"Good morning to you, Sir.
We wish you a happy New Year,
Great health, long life,
Which God may bestowe
So long as you stay here below.
May he bestowe the house you are in
Where you go out and you go in.
Time by moments steals away
First the hour and then the day.
Small the lost days may appear
But yet the[y] soon amount up to a year.
This another year is gone
And now it is no more of our own
But if it brings our promises good
As the year before the flood.
But let none of us forget
It has left us much in debt,
A favor from the Lord received
Since which our spirits hath been grieved.
Marked by the unerring hand
Thus in his book our record stands.
Who can tell the vast amount
Placed to each of our accounts?"

But while you owe the debt is large
You may pleade a full discharge.
But poor and selfish sinners, say
What can you to justice pay?
Trembling last for life is past
And into prison you may be cast.
Happy is the believing soul.
Christ for you has paid the whole.
We have this New Year's morning call[ed] you by your name
And disturbed you from your rest.
But we hope no harm by the same.
As we ask come tell us your desire
And if it be your desire
Our guns and pistols they shall fire.
Since we hear of no defiance
You shall hear the art of science.
When we pull triggers and powder burns
You shall hear the roaring of guns.
Oh, daughters of righteous[ness], we will rise
And warm our eyes and bless our hearts,
For the old year's gone and the New Year's come
And for good luck we'll fire our guns."

Mr. Gary's account continues:

"Then once more came the booming of the guns, followed by a moment of silence. There was something religious about it, one 'shooter' said, and the reporter could agree. With the firing of the last gun, one stood stockstill there on the wooded hill at 3 o'clock in the morning and saw the rising of the mists from the bottom lands—heard the rumbling echoes rolling over the hills and swamplands and dying away unchallenged in the distance. Hal Stroupe, tall and rugged, leaned in silence against his old blunderbuss and stared after the rumblings, his bony, powerful face silhouetted in the half-moonlight, reminding an old-timer of 'Uncle Eph,' Hal's grandfather, who had years ago been an ardent follower of the shoot.

"That was the way it went all night—the speech, the guns, the silence, then the food—over swampland and mud-gummed roads—until 6 p.m. on New Year's Day, when, tired and happy with a job well done, the townspeople crowded into the 'Square' and boomed out their last salute to the New Year."

In consequence of correspondence between the writer of this paper and Mr. Beam, a friend of Mr. Beam, Mr. S. Vance Sellers,

of Cherryville, Route 2, offered, for addition to this paper, a ballad, "The 1941 New Year's Shooters Poem," which he "wrote about our annual celebration in and around Cherryville":

"Floyd and I on Saturday
Took my Ford and rode away;
So the shooters wouldn't have any worry
We bought their powder at Granite Quarry.

"That freight agent on the Yadkin Line
When we arrived was feeling fine—
Mr. Williams is his name,
And he was mighty glad we came.

"So everyone in our crowd
Could shoot their guns good and loud,
We bought seventy-two pounds or more
For our annual New Year's Roar.

"Our crowd consisted of boys and men.
We met down at the Wayside Inn.
We waited there to start our fun
Soon after the birth of 'Forty-One.

"While 'Forty-One was young and gay
We started shooting in around Flay;
At Guy Beam's we first shot—
He served us breakfast good and hot.

"This year another veteran joined our crowd,
And he said his speech out very loud;
We all were glad that he came—
And Charlie Huss is his name.

"There's no place in the U. S. A.
That celebrates the New Year's Day
And during their rounds get such a thrill
Like we folks do in Cherryville.

"A photographer was on the scene
With his moving-picture machine
And made pictures of our crowd
While our muskets roared aloud.

"While shooting at the Square in town,
Our old war muskets sure did sound.
There they sounded the best, 'twould seem,
While we were shooting for Paul H. Beam.

"We shot for the officials of the town
While the local people stood around,
And then we bid them all adieu
Until Nineteen Hundred and Forty-Two."

In a letter accompanying a copy of the speech, Mr. Beam wrote:

"Cherryville, N. C.,
January 27, 1948.

"Dear Mr. Hudson:

"In answer to your letter of January 11th, in regard to the New Year's Shoot and to myself as Crier for the group.

"I am 75 years of age, of German descent. My ancestors landed in Charleston, S. C., in the year 1767. One of the settlers came to Beaverdam, known as Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, at that time, but it is Gaston County now. I am a descendant of this Gaston settler. I have lived in Gaston County, near Cherryville, all my life, attended the county schools, and am a farmer and carpenter by trade. I have known the 'New Year's Speech' around 60 years, and have been saying it for 59 years. I learned the speech from my two brothers, Lee and Jacob Beam, one fall while we were picking cotton. I had never seen it in print until recently when I had a copy printed myself. My brothers were older than I and they learned it from older members of the family.

"Many years ago there was a number of groups of the New Year's Shooters. Two groups in Lincoln County, two in Gaston County. It seems these have all played out but the one group here in Cherryville. The Cherryville group has never disbanded and will keep going for many more years to come. We have a number of young men in the group who are willing to carry on; we have in our group men of all ages. I have been going with the group for 59 years with the exception of a few years around 1900. This has been a custom here for 150 years or more. . . .

"Very truly yours,
"A. SIDNEY BEAM."

From this letter it is evident that the "Speech" is traditional as far as Mr. Beam is concerned. That it is generally so is proved by the occurrence, in H. M. Belden's *Ballads and Songs Collected*

by the *Missouri Folk-Lore Society* (Columbia, Missouri, 1940, p. 514), of a twelve-line fragment entitled "The New Year's 'Sermon.'" In the "Sermon" the first four lines correspond in purport, idea, and phrasing to the first four of Mr. Beam's; 11. 5-8 have almost identical counterparts, including rimes, to Mr. Beam's; but 11. 9-12, while parallel in idea and purpose, are differently phrased and rimed. The informant of "The New Year's 'Sermon,'" Mr. C. H. Williams, stated, in 1917, that the "Sermon" was the verbal part of "a custom observed in Bollinger County" (Missouri). His accompanying account of the action associated with it coincides in every essential particular with Mr. Gary's, quoted above.

In his headnote to "The New Year's 'Sermon,'" Professor Belden points out that the custom of which it is a part is "similar, and perhaps genetically related, to the French custom reported" (also from Missouri) in "*La Guignolée (La Gaie Année)*," of which he gives an account with music and text. In this the general purpose is the same as that of the New Year's shoot. A band of young people led by a fiddler serenade their neighbors on New Year's Eve, singing a song in which they wish all the household a happy New Year and ask for a chitling four feet long or, in lieu of that, the eldest daughter ("Nous lui ferons bonne chère./Nous lui ferons chauffer les pieds"); then, after further lyric pleasantry, and apology for disturbing the household, depart with repeated good wishes.

There is, as Professor Belden also suggests by implication, perhaps some analogy, if not genetic relationship, between the New Year's shoot and the old English mummers' plays. These, as Professor G. L. Kittredge once pointed out (*Journal of American Folklore*, XXII, 394), were a familiar feature of New England life in the eighteenth century.¹ One such play was reported, from memory, not from performance, in the same number of the *Journal* (pp. 387-94), by Antoinette Taylor, of St. Louis County, Missouri, who obtained the text of it in 1909 from a native of Worcestershire, England, as he remembered it from his boyhood there some thirty-five years earlier. "The players," according to the informant, "went from one farmhouse to another, asking permission to give their play." Though the mummers were primarily concerned with the celebration of Christmas, their plays frequently embodied good wishes for the

¹ See also, Marie Campbell. "Survivals of Old Folk Drama in the Kentucky Mountains," *JAF*, 51 (Jan. 1938), 10-24. Miss Campbell reports fairly full texts of a Christmas and a Plough Monday Play, and a fragment of a St. George Play—all from the same source.

New Year. For example, one from Bulby, Lincolnshire, printed in R. J. E. Tiddy's *The Mummers' Play* (Oxford, 1923, pp. 237-40), ends:

And we thank you for civility
And for what you gave us here:
We wish you all good night
And another Happy New Year.

In such a melting pot of folklores as America, and as Piedmont North Carolina no less than other regions, it would have been perfectly natural to fuse memories of the mummers' plays with old German St. Sylvester's Eve observances.

Thus, "The New Year's Shoot," which, according to the January 8, 1948, number of *The Eagle*, of Cherryville, N. C., was celebrated with great éclat in Gaston County on January 1, 1948, is rooted in customs already old when the Rhinelanders and Moravians left their homelands in the eighteenth century. It has been continuously observed by descendants of these people in North Carolina for at least 175 years. It has picked up, somewhere along the line, possibly from hints in the old English mummers' plays, "The New Year's Speech," which seems to have been reported elsewhere only from Missouri. And according to Mr. Beam, custom and "Speech" have a healthy chance for survival in North Carolina "for many more years to come."

The University of North Carolina

RIDDLES AND POETRY *

by

Archer Taylor

Riddles may have the form of poetry. They may at times have a poetic content. And in rare instances they may have both the form and the content of poetry. We need go no farther than the nursery rhyme of Humpty Dumpty for a simple paradox of popular invention that has been put into verse:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall,
All the King's horses and all the King's men
Can't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

Another example of the same sort is the familiar riddle for a cherry:

As I was going through the garden gap,
Whom should I meet but Dick Redcap?
A stick in his hand,
A stone in his throat.
If you'll guess my riddle,
I'll give you a groat.

Such versifications have been freely made at all times and in many countries. Perhaps the most ingenious conception to have found an English versifier is the description of fish in a net:

Robbers came to our house
And we were all in;
The house leapt out at the windows
And we were all ta'en.

Such folk rhymes are more or less successful endeavors to put an enigmatic paradox into the form of poetry. The folk rhymes have suggested making more elaborate constructions in which often little of a popular nature is present.

I shall call these inventions literary riddles or art riddles, since we often know the names of the writers who have composed these literary exercises. A typical example of the genre is the Renaissance English description of a mulberry:

My husband gives two gownes to me
of sundry colors every yeare;

* This paper was read as the Comparative Literature II Section of the Modern Language Association Meeting held in Detroit, Michigan, on December 28-29, 1947.

greene is the one which I do weare,
 so long until it be all thread-bare.
 White is the other as the sunne,
 of many peeces up and downe,
 yet like to that few workmen can
 devise to make another gowne.
 The wiser sort, where in they dote,
 doe call me foole upon a toy;
 but yet of me they take a note
 that death is past when I do joy.¹

The notion that a tree wears two gowns a year is a theme often found in folk riddling, which characteristically uses such simple personifications. In this instance the writer has elaborated the notion somewhat beyond the folk theme of a person who is clothed in the summer and naked in the winter. The notion that few workmen can duplicate the dress of the mulberry is also a folk theme, but it is ordinarily found in descriptions of a honey comb or a bridge of ice. The last lines of the mulberry riddle deal with materials that cannot be called popular in any sense. Since the Latin name of the mulberry is *morus* and *morus* signifies in Greek, a fool, the riddler says:

The wiser sort, wherein they dote,
 doe call me foole upon a toy,

but this is far too sophisticated a pun to ever be guessed. The last two lines, which mean that death or winter is past when the mulberry tree is in blossom, sound more like a poem about nature than a riddle.

There are many inventions like this literary riddle of the mulberry. They are often less well-conceived and usually exhibit the typical failure of the riddler to hold firmly to a single conception to which he compares or equates his answer. By admitting heterogeneous and conflicting elements he destroys the unity of his theme and its poetic value.

I find much greater worth in those folk riddles that contain what seems to me an essentially poetic quality. To be sure, the subjects of most riddles prevent any poetic emotions from arising. Such prosaic objects as eggs, cows, vegetables, or household objects do not easily lend themselves to a poetic use in the brief compass of a riddle. There are, nevertheless, some riddles that contain a clearly perceived

¹ A. Brandl, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, XLII (1906), 57, No. 34.

scene and suggest a certain intensity of emotion. A poet might, I think, envy the inventor of a Uraon description of a cobra:

A mint leaf on a swaying head.²

The Lapps say of a fire:

A woman is sitting in the corner with red berries
in her lap.³

With a wider sweep of vision they see snow as

A hen runs on the ice and its tail touches the
skerries.⁴

The Uraon see the river flowing into the sea in

A boy goes to his father's house.⁵

The example that has perhaps impressed me most strongly is a Uraon riddle for birth and death:

Clenched fists coming, open hands going.⁶

This has, it seems to me, the qualities of great poetry. The inventor has clearly and vividly put the scene before us. He has chosen a form that is entirely adequate even in a translation that can preserve only the parallel structure of the original and must sacrifice the rhythm of the verse. Like many pieces of great poetry, he states a simple fact truthfully and at the same time is richly suggestive. We may see in the scene an angry man appeased by his opponent. We may see a symbol of the fact that a newborn child has the world in its grasp and a dead man's relaxed fingers take nothing with him.

I have intended to do no more than to suggest that the essence of riddles is closely allied to the essence of poetry and by offering this suggestion to lead you to read riddles more attentively and more appreciatively.

University of California

²W. G. Archer, *The Blue Grove* (London, 1940), p. 180, No. 21.

³J. Qvigstad, *Lappische Sprichwörter und Rätsel*, "Kristiania Etnografiske Museums Skrifter," I, iii (Kristiania, 1922), No. 16.

⁴Qvigstad, No. 92. I have written *skerries* instead of the literal *islands*, since the bits of land known to the Norwegian Lapps are more accurately described by that word.

⁵Archer, p. 181, No. 25.

⁶Archer, p. 190, No. 174.

MOTHER'S OLD BALLAD

by

Leslie L. Haskin

I learned the song entitled "Mother's Old Ballad" from my mother when I was a small boy, sixty or more years ago. Mother's name was Emily Haskin, *nee* Rowley. She was born at Nauvoo, Illinois, December 25, 1843. Her father was John Rowley, born in New England in 1798. If my mother learned the song from her parents, it, therefore, may be of Eastern Colonial origin.

In 1845 my mother, with her parents, removed to Columbia County, Wisconsin, where she grew up in a settlement that was predominately Scotch. The township where she lived was named Caledonia, and a neighborhood cross-road post office there was called Alloway. Thus the possibility of this song's having a Scotch background is plausible. In analyzing the melody I found what seems like further evidence of Scotch influence. I have shown this in the written melody by the staccato eighth notes, followed by dotted quarter notes. This seems to me to be a modified Scotch Snap,

which is usually written as follows—.

This melody does not exactly fit all stanzas of the song, but this is a common defect in all melodies which have been passed from generation to generation orally. Anyone familiar with old ballads will recognize this defect and have no difficulty in adjusting the varying syllables to the notes.

It has been suggested that the last line of each stanza should read, "And yield to my valiant swain-o," instead of "slain-o," as I have given it, but I have written it exactly as my memory heard it when my mother sang the song. Also, a younger sister insists that the first line of the refrain should read, "A-shule, a-shule, a-shule-a-poppa-coon," instead of "poppa-cool," as I give it.

If folklorists are able to furnish any information as to the identity of this song or know of additional versions or variants, I shall appreciate their communicating them to me.

MOTHER'S OLD BALLAD

My mother-in-law she is so cross,
She will not give me a cow or a horse,



Refrain.



But things must change for better or for worse,
And yield to my valiant slain-o.

I'll go up on yonder hill,
And there I'll sit and cry my fill,
'Till every tear shall turn a mill,
And yield to my valiant slain-o.

I'll sell my churn, I'll sell my reel,
I'll sell my clock and spinning-wheel,
To buy my love a sword and a shield,
And yield to my valiant slain-o.

Refrain.

A-shule, a-shule, a-shule-a-poppa-cool,
A-shudle, and a-shudle, and a-shudle-come-around,
A cross-come-a-wa to my hoodle-doodle-do,
And yield to my valiant slain-o.

Newport, Oregon

HOLLY AND IVY

by

John Tyree Fain

In the little group of early English lyrics known as the Holly and Ivy poems the prevailing motif is the ungallant treatment of Ivy, a woman, by Holly, a man. Holly is inside a warm house in mid-winter and refuses to let Ivy in. Holly and his men are dancing and singing, Ivy and her women are weeping, and the burden drones,

For Holly must have the mastery
As the maner is.¹

Why *must* Holly have the mastery; why does such treatment constitute the proper "maner"?

R. L. Greene, having exhausted the interpretative scholarship on the subject, concludes as follows:

The exclusion of Ivy and her women from the hall in the carol has not hitherto been satisfactorily explained by any of its commentators. The key to it lies in the general disfavor with which the folk-belief seems to have regarded woman (and her symbolic plant) on Christmas Day itself. It takes this precise form of exclusion in a number of customs behind which is the great importance attached to the omen of the "first foot." For a woman to be the first foot on Christmas is generally considered unlucky; in a tradition reported from three shires a woman is not permitted to enter a house at all on Christmas Day, but must sleep there the night before. In some instances the plant-symbolism has been united with the custom of "first-footing." At Holderness on Christmas and New Year's mornings a sprig of holly would be laid outside the door to ensure that the first thing to enter should be a male.²

Thus Greene links the Holly and Ivy poems with omens and ceremonies based upon practices of sex taboo. His interpretation appears to be sound, but it does not account for the particular form observed in the more highly developed members of this little song group.

¹ E. K. Chambers and F. Sidgwick, *Early English Lyrics* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1926), p. 239.

² R. L. Greene, *The Early English Carol* (Oxford, 1935), p. ci.

That form—a suggested *debat* between apparently symbolic characters—points to a connection with festival literature.

Of the general relation of early lyrics to the festival tradition Chambers speaks as follows:

... courtly adapters have drawn more freely upon the amorous elements in the festival songs than upon the invocations of the summer itself which accompanied them in the village ritual. But examples of these also are to be found. . . . These complete the connection of the *caroles* and the *chanson populaire* to which they belong with the folk-festivals. To them, one may conjecture, originally belonged the title of *reverdie*, song of the earth's *renouveau*. . . . It is to be observed that the descriptive passages, of blossoming trees and luting birds, which occur in the introductions to the *chansons d'aventure*, are just of the nature to be expected on the theory that these represent an adaptation of the manner of more primitive spring songs.³

The *renouveau*, however, appears to be only a part of the original festival ritual enacted in many parts of the world, a ritual based upon magical formulas of sympathetic representation. By symbolizing the death of the old year and the birth of the new, primitive people believed that they could help nature bring about the succession of seasons. It seems to me that the Holly and Ivy poems belong among folk songs, plays, and games which retain vestiges of this ritual seasonal struggle. Let us notice several examples of such ceremonies as a background for a detailed consideration of one of the Holly and Ivy poems.

In its simplest form the festival is to be seen as the burial of a representative of evil, or death. J. G. Frazer relates that the burial of Varilo used to be celebrated in Russia at the end of June. An old man was given a coffin containing a Priapus-like figure representing Varilo. Weeping women escorted the old man out of town to the burial place, where they buried the representation of Varilo and afterwards danced and played games.⁴

The ancient Greek festival of the Pharmakoi and the Eiresione is more complete. In an appointed place outside the city two men were made to hold in their hands cheese, barley cakes, and figs, while they were ceremonially beaten on the genital organs with leeks.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 270-271.

⁴ *The Golden Bough*, "The Dying God" (London: MacMillan, 1915), p. 262.

Then they were killed and burned, and their ashes were scattered. On the next a boy, the child of living parents, carried into the feast-place an olive branch on which hung figs and bread, jugs of wine and oil, and a drinking cup, thus symbolizing the bringing in of the season of plenty.⁵

Cornford cites another form of the ritual that used to take place in India, the contest between Kamsa and Krsna. The supporters of the former had black faces, those of the latter red faces. The author says of this ceremony:

The conflict of black and red men is clearly a remnant of a nature conflict between the representatives of winter and spring or summer.⁶

Similar to this is the sham battle that used to be held in Sweden on May Day. A group representing winter was dressed in furs and threw snow balls. Another group, representing summer, wore garlands of flowers and leaves. Summer always won the fight, and the ceremony ended with a feast.⁷

The English mummers' play, which depicts a fight between apparently symbolic antagonists—a black adversary and the hero, typically between Turkish Knight and a green-clad St. George—is another example of the seasonal struggle, many scholars believe.

What characteristics may be observed in the Holly and Ivy poems that seem to link them with such a tradition? Let us examine a typical example.⁸

(Burden)

Nay, Ivy, hyt shall not be, iwys;
Let Holy hafe the maystry, as the maner is.

"Hyt shall not be" because if Ivy, as the representative of winter, wins whatever she is contending for, then summer will not defeat winter—the ground hog will have seen his shadow—and according to sympathetic magic, summer will not come or will be considerably deferred. So Holly must have the mastery, as the manner, or game, or rite demands.

⁵ F. L. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (London: Arnold), p. 55.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷ Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

⁸ Greene, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

(Stanza 1)

Holy stond in the hall, fayre to behold;
 Ivy stond without the dore; she ys ful sore a-cold.

Holly has the place of honor; Ivy must not be shown any consideration at all, because of the symbolism. Ivy is also appropriately cold.

(Stanza 2)

Holy and his mery men, they dawnsyn and they syng;
 Ivy and her maydenys, they wepyn and they wryng.

It is proper for the spirit of spring or summer to dance and sing to imitate magically running streams and singing birds, and for the spirit of winter, a time of suffering and darkness and apparent death, to weep and wring the hands.

(Stanza 3)

Ivy hath a kybe; she kaugt it with the colde;
 So mot they all haf ae that with Ivy hold.

Ivy has chilblains to show that she is suffering from the cold, since the more marks, or characterizing tags, the representative has, the more effective will the magic be.

(Stanza 4)

Holy hat berys as rede as any rose;
 The foster, the hunters kepe hem fro the doo(s).

Red berries represent summer better than any other growing thing available in winter; also they are preserved by the forester and thus "win" from the magical standpoint—they are not destroyed.

(Stanza 5)

Ivy hath berys as blake as any slo;
 Ther com the oule and ete hym as she goo.

Black is usually one of the marks of winter or death in the festival games and plays. The owl, a bird of prey and of darkness, is a natural one to associate with winter and death. That the black berries are eaten signifies that winter will be destroyed.

(Stanza 6)

Holy hath byrdys, a ful fayre flok
 The nyghtengale, the poppynguy, the gayntyl lavyrok.

Holly has a full fair flock of birds which represent spring to the Englishman.

(Stanza 7)

Gode Ivy, whatt byrdys ast thou?
Non but the howlat that kreye, "How, how."

That the reprobation necessarily expressed in the game does not apply to Ivy as an individual but to the principle she represents may be signified by the adjective "Gode."

If the lines quoted above have been correctly construed, it is evident that the Holly and Ivy poems are a part of that large body of early literature which either stems from or has felt the impact of the pagan seasonal struggle.

University of Florida

LECC THOLLCIND AND THE TWELVE DOORS OF THE SOUL

by

Howard Meroney

In a richly documented essay on the "Seven and Nine Holes in Man" ¹ Kozumplik sought an Oriental origin for this staple of allegory and enigma. The standard and, it would seem, obvious formula does not everywhere appear, the enumeration being disturbed by a taboo against counting the privy parts, and the definition itself being uncertain, whether, for instance, the navel and nipples are properly openings. To the list of peculiar variants I would add two from Irish, where others more regular may yet turn up, though I believe none older.

The first comes from the *Dindshenchas*, a set of toponymic legends based largely on fancies of etymology. The metrical account differs little from the Middle Irish prose of the Rennes MS, which Stokes translated thus:

Tollchenn, the jester of Enna Cennselach or of Eochaid, Enna Cennselach's son, fell in a battle against the Saxons on the Ictian Sea when Niall of the Nine Hostages was mortally wounded by Eochaid's hand. The jester's head was cut off, and together with it the helmet, for the helmet stuck round the head and could not be broken or separated therefrom. So the head was cast into the sea, and one wave delivered it to another till it arrived at yonder *Lecc* "flagstone;" and there were nine holes therein: its two ears, and two eyes, and two cheeks, and two nostrils, and the mouth. Whence was said *Tollchenn* "Hole-head," and *Lecc Thollchinn* "Holehead's Flagstone," the stone whereat it arrived.²

This is a patchwork of many yarns, indeed, with some scant shreds of history in the nobler names, and no wonder the editors could not identify the jester or his relics. Even the cleaving of the helmet to the head, which gives the story a specious circumstantiality, is a miracle of romance.³ And the marvellous sea-voyage was readily occasioned by the fact that *tollchenn* designated also a marine animal,

¹ Cf. *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, V (1941), 1-24.

² Whitley Stokes, "The Rennes Dindsenchas." *Revue Celtique*, XVI (1895), 74 § 122. Cf. also Edward Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, Part IV. ("Royal Irish Academy Todd Lecture Series," Vol. XI. Dublin, 1924), pp. 222-25.

³ Compare the shirt of Nessus and the magic armor of the Red Knight in *Sir Perceval of Gales*, ed. Campion and Holthausen (Heidelberg, 1913), lines 741 ff.

no doubt "whale."⁴ More important, the parallel expression *brat tollcend*, "mantle with a hole for the head,"⁵ suggests that the original *Lecc Tollcend*, similarly pierced but once, was some kind of flat stone, with good likelihood an omphalos.⁶ Of this possibility the story-teller was unaware, and his fresh invention is much to be cavilled at, for the nine holes are a miscount—unless the helmet hid a tenth, of course, the one from which Tollchenn the Jester got his name. In confusing the two ideas of seven holes in the head with nine in the body, however, the shanachy is not without company, as Kozumplik's examples show. And with allowance for the taboo his counting of the "cheeks" is an ingenious measure, since the Irish word employed for them does not signify a mere concavity; in two other examples a stream is said to issue out of the *oil* "cheek," and however strange it may sound here, a hole of sorts is undoubtedly meant.⁷

The second item, with its metaphor of "doors," calls to mind also the symbolism of the human body as a house, some ancient and modern instances of which Archer Taylor has already examined.⁸ The text I am forced to give betrays the garbling ignorance of its transmitters, who contaminated the theological principle with legal distinctions about bloodshed. Atkinson edited the passage in a footnote to the supplementary "Heptads" among the early Irish laws, and his translation follows:

These are the twelve doors of the soul that are in man's body, viz.:—The top of the head (the crown, or suture of the hollow of the back of the head), the cavity of the temples, the apple of the throat, the hollow of the breast, the cavity of the armpit, the breast bone, the navel, the "cairt" [skin?] of the side, the bend of the elbow, the hollow of the ham, the thick of the thigh, the "bull" (of the loin), the heart, the nerve of the foot.⁹ It is a bit late now to warn the

⁴ Cf. Whitley Stokes, *In Cath Catharda* ("Irische Texte," IV, ii), line 4333.

⁵ Cf. Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, II, 314, translating "mantle hole-headed;" less likely would be a rendering "mantle with a hole at the top."

⁶ Cf. J. Loth, "Omphalos chez les Celtes," *Revue des Études Anciennes*, XVII (1918), 193-206; XIX (1920), 35-38. Has it been observed that the name *Lis Fáil*, as a palindrome, would suitably befit an omphalos?

⁷ Cf. *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*. N.O.P. (Dublin, 1940), s.v. *oil*, and *Hessens Irisches Lexikon* (Halle, 1938), s.v. *óal*; see further, particularly, *Cáin Adamnain*, § 7, and *Ériu*, II (1905), 120, line 3.

⁸ Cf. *Corona, Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Birthday of Samuel Singer*, ed. by Arno Schirokauer and Wolfgang Paulsen (Durham, 1941), pp. 2-7.

⁹ Cf. *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, V, 363, note d, appended to Heptad LXXIII, on cases of bloodshed.

scribe that he too has miscounted, and perhaps idle to correct him. *De capite ad pedem* he enumerates hollows rather than holes, and I suppose, as a sample of rectification, that *feth coisi*, Atkinson's "nerve of the foot," refers somehow to the hollows beside the tendon of Achilles. The major feature of note is negative, however, a failure to mention any true orifice piercing the body, as if the typical formula of apertures had been avoided by intent. Thus indirectly we have evidence that the motif of "the holes in man" was current in Ireland during mediaeval times.

Temple University

PARTIAL IMMERSION IN GEORGIA AND MAINE

by

B. J. Whiting

In the rambling course of "Guyuscutus, Royal Nonesuch and Other Hoaxes,"¹ there appeared a summary of a scene from W. T. Thompson's *Major Jones's Courtship* (1844):

Mary then brought Pete into a "new play" which she had learned in college at Macon, called "Interduction to the King and Queen." Three chairs were put side by side with a sheet over them and the King and Queen took their places on the end chairs. The company, except for the lords and ladies of the court, was then excluded and brought in one by one to be "introduced." Cousin Pete was the first and he came in "bowin and scrapin, and twistin and rigglein and putting on more ares nor a French dancin master." Said the King: "Rise gallant knight . . . rise, we dub you knight of the royal bath." Pete sat on the middle seat and fell into a tub of cold water which had been substituted for the chair in his absence. "He got as mad as a hornet, and sed it was a d—d mean trick to sarve enny body so, specially in cold wether."²

Despite its royal trappings the fundamental process of the trick is simple, easily invented, or re-invented, and admirably adjusted to the rough and ready humor of any rural community. It is the kind of practical joke which convulses the onlookers by upsetting the dignity and disturbing the comfort of the victim without material injury to his person or possessions, and as such belongs to the folklore of party pranks. We are not surprised, then, to find it described in "My First Courtship," one of the poems of David Barker (1816-1874) of Exeter (Penobscot County), Maine:

I told her how, at Captain Ware's,
We fixed a quilt across two chairs,
Which Lydia Rich and Rachael Hart
Had stood, or fixed, two feet apart—
And how we got one Edward Fox—
'Twas not your learn'd Judge Edward Fox—
But he of the long and yellow locks,

¹ *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, VIII (1944), 251-275.

² P. 254.

He of the sunburnt, dog-tail curls—
 To set him down between those girls,
 When his true lover, quick, perhap,
 Would come and sit upon his lap.
 One fact was kept from Ed., you know:
 The yawning, watery tub below.
 Although we had a world of fun
 With Edward Fox—the Baptist's son—
 That single hour's diversion
 Sent Edward—son of Deacon Fox—
 Half over with the orthodox.
 Although his heart and head were right—
 Although, in soul, a Baptist still,
 To gratify a stubborn will,
 The lower half of Edward Fox
 Was ever, from that blessed night,
 A rabid, blue-light orthodox,
 Or death against immersion.³

Although the similarity of titles and the appearance of the same joke in both works might suggest that Barker knew the earlier piece, there seems to be no further evidence of indebtedness. Indeed, Barker's long poem is too closely filled with vivid reflections of life in a small Maine township during the second quarter of the last century to admit of much factual borrowings. As a poet Barker is often derivative, but as a chronicler he is remarkably faithful to the characters and scenes which he had always known. Even if Barker took, which is unlikely, his anecdote from Thompson, he would, by replacing the nostalgic paraphernalia of royalty with the sound New England antagonism of Congregationalist and Baptist, have done in his degree much what Chaucer did if it was an incident from the *Filocolo* which became the *Franklin's Tale*.

Harvard University

³ *Poems by David Barker, with Historical Sketch by Hon. John E. Godfrey* (Bangor, 1876), pp. 47-48.

RUSTIC IMAGERY IN MISSISSIPPI PROVERBS

by

Ernest Cox

Early in 1945 the collection of proverbs was begun in Mississippi for the American Dialect Society. There have been several interruptions in this work, and the progress of the collection has been casual. In spite of this slow, almost desultory, progress, a substantial beginning has been made with the more than three thousand proverbs that have been gathered.

Approximately fifteen per cent of the items collected are so obviously derived from rural life as to contain rustic images that are highly graphic.

This paper is a brief florilegium. Its material comprises nearly a hundred proverbial expressions belonging to the collection. It should be understood, parenthetically, that the Society is interested in assembling not only aphorisms proper, but also such expressions as comparisons which are proverbially used.

The groupings which I have made of these sayings are somewhat arbitrary and do not follow the usual patterns employed in classifying imagery. I have used them simply as a convenience for displaying the material.

The first category comprises sayings which pertain to the moods, appearance, or characteristics of persons. In a part of central Mississippi it is said of one who is angry, "The pigs are runnin' through the 'tater patch." In a nearby area a person with a deceitful appearance is said to have a "skim milk eye." If he has faulty vision, he may be described as "too blind to see through a wire fence." "She's beef to the heels" is the proverbial description of a particularly stout woman. More conventionally than these, a seasoned reprobate is characterized as "old as the hills and crooked as a ram's horn." The inexperienced person is hailed as "so green that when it rains he'll sprout."

In northeast Mississippi a person who is debilitated through illness or fatigue is sometimes said to be "so weak he can't pull a hen off the roost," or he may reply to a greeting by saying, "I'm not fit to drive a hen from the door." If his joints or muscles are stiff, he may insist that he is "as stiff as a good road mule."

From the Vicksburg area comes this manner of describing an emaciated person: "He looks like a coon-hide stretched over some

barrel hoops." "His hide wouldn't hold shucks" appears to be in somewhat general use as a picture of a victim of violence. In the Delta it is sometimes said of a bow-legged person: "He couldn't hem a pig in a one-foot ditch."

According to the conventions of northeast Mississippi, if a person is hot, he may be "as hot as a blistered man in a pepper patch," "as a country boy's pistol on the Fourth of July," or "as a hen in a wool basket trying to lay a goose-egg."

In south Mississippi we learn that "a stingy man gives an egg to get a chicken"; in north Mississippi that "he'd skin an ant for his tallow"; and in the central part of the state that "he'd skin a louse for his hide and tallow."

Man's voluntary inertia is recognized in the well-known "If the corn's not shelled, drive on" and in the expression "hitting a lick and a promise at the woodpile." In northeast Mississippi it is customary to say of the afflicted person, "He was born tired and raised lazy"; and in south Mississippi, "He was born lazy and had a relapse." The inspired epithet, however, comes from Vicksburg, where the Negro description of the shiftless person is "He's got the hook-worm hustle." Along with this, one may place "He has the sharecropper stance."

Proverbial remarks disparaging to a person's character range from "He's as full of faults as a dog is of fleas" and "He's as low down as a worm's belly"—both of which sayings appear to be general—to this pronunciamento from central Mississippi: "He ought to have been hung when a potato vine would hang him." An untruthful man is described as "such a liar he has to get somebody else to call his hogs."

This search for proverbial expressions has revealed that an ugly person may not be merely "as ugly as home-made soap," or "as ugly as a mud fence," but that he may be even "as ugly as a mud fence daubed with tadpoles." At the same time, he may be "as smart as forty crickets"; "as rough as a cob and twice as corny"; or "as busy as a blue-tailed fly." For the last of these is sometimes used the expression "like a fly in a molasses jug," or "like a bee in a honey bucket."

The second category comprises sayings which pertain to the actions of persons or things. A politician, for example, may—and sometimes does—tell his listeners that voting for his opponent is "like wintering a dry cow." One's aggressiveness in pursuit may be described in "He was after it like the stink after onion," or "like

a duck on a June bug," or "like a pet coon into the churn." To "go to bed with the chickens" appears to be as generally spoken as practiced in rural Mississippi. Versatility and force are expressed in the widely-used phrase, "more ways than a country man can whip a mule." If a person grins, he may be grinning "like a baked possum," or "like a jackass eating briars." If an idle person is quizzed, he may insist that he's "helping Joe pile brush." If he considers a task trivial, he may brush it off by saying, "I'm not going to take the time and trouble to shuck a nubbin." One of the most vivid of these images is one which describes a person's squirming "like a country mule hitched beside the railroad track." Other similarly effective images are in the expressions, "work like maulin' rails," "talkin' like a cotton gin in pickin' time," "gruntin' like a fat sow when you scratch her back with a corn-cob," and "He slunk across the yard like a suck-egg hound." The final image in this group involves a variation of a well-known challenge: "I'll see him as deep in hell as a pigeon can fly in a fortnight." This and the last half-dozen other sayings come from the Vicksburg area.

The third group of sayings deals with the characteristics of objects. Something sour, for example, may be as sour "as kraut," or "as a crab apple," or "sour enough to make a pig squeal." If it is noisy, it may make as much noise "as a new saddle," or "as hogs under the house." Objects that are thick may be "thicker than fishing poles in a cane-brake," "Than boll-weevils," or "than fleas on a fat pup," or "as thick as cuckleburs in a colt's tail." Whatever is slow is "as slow as molasses in January," "as cream rising on buttermilk," or—more picturesquely—"slowly by degrees—like the cat ate the grubbing hoe." An object may be "as slick as goose-grease," or "three shades blacker'n a he-martin," or it may move "as straight as a martin to his gourd." The extent of a bob-tailed dog's deprivation may be understood from the declaration that "two inches of that dog's tail will cure any disease."

The fourth group of expressions is concerned with situations or circumstances, rather than with persons or objects. If a project turns out disappointingly for some woman, a friend may observe, "She will have to lick her calf over again." The expression belongs to northeast Mississippi. If a person charges another mistakenly, it is said of him, "He has the wrong sow by the ear." The futility of an undertaking is vividly set forth in the expression, "Just as well try to make a worm walk on his tail." Vocational misdirection is forcefully put in "You ain't done nothin' 'cept spile a mighty good field

hand." When there is occasion to add something for good measure, the act may be accompanied by the words, "Let the tail go with the hide." Of a field of high weeds, it is sometimes said, "If you don't cut 'em soon, you'll have to ring 'em." The Negroes of central Mississippi have a vivid image for the act of silencing a person: "He poured me back in the jug." In northeast Mississippi, a man occasionally makes the facetious remark, "When I married, all I promised my wife was wood and water—wood on her back and water in her eyes."

Some of the most interesting of this group of images relate to meals. If a person in northeast Mississippi has reason to expect guests, he may promise to "put the big pot in the little one, kill a pumpkin, and churn." When the guests arrive, the host may issue this modest invitation to the table: "Let's go rattle the dishes and fool the cats." Sometimes the complaint is heard that there is a "lot of shiftin' of the dishes for the fewness of the vittles." And from central Mississippi we have this characterization of a slouchy woman: "She wipes the plate with the cat's tail." Then, too, sometimes the guests explain early, "We've just come after a chunk of fire"—that is, for a short visit.

The final category consists of shrewd observations about both persons and things. Generally, they incorporate much provincial philosophy. "No telling which way luck, or a half-broke steer, is going to run," and "To see how folks will miss you, stick your finger in the pond, then pull it out and look at the hole" are fair examples. The second of these is a Negro proverb, as is also another, which has been used on occasion when a Negro has been inconsiderately treated by a railway station agent: "The littler the station, the bigger the agent." Still another proverb attaches a reservation to the familiar "You can't get blood out of a turnip," by adding "but you can wring the devil out of the top." Similarly, "A rolling stone gathers no moss, but it acquires polish." From central Mississippi we get this Negro observation: "Cows can't catch no rabbits." "A short horse," we learn from south Mississippi, "is easy to curry." The observation that "A scary horse needs a stout bridle" comes from Vicksburg. "A lean horse for a long race" and "Horse-sense is just stable thinking" come from central Mississippi. It is observed in north Mississippi that "It rains on the just and on the unjust. It rains on the unjust at fodder-pulling time," and again that "If you lie down with dogs, you will get up with fleas."

The behavior of creatures in search of food is described by the next three proverbs, all from central Mississippi: "A hungry hound thinks not of her whelps," "A hungry rooster never cackles when he scratches up a worm," and "A hen with biddies never burst her craw." From northeast Mississippi we get the final items in this category: "A worm is about the only thing that does not fall down," "You can't make a hog squeal by hitting him with an ear of corn," and "The rooster can crow, but it's the hen that delivers the goods." Last of all, the homely counterpart of "Where are the snows of yesterday?" is in the remark attributed to the rooster: "What's the use? Just an egg yesterday and a feather duster tomorrow!"

University of Florida

BOOK REVIEWS

The American Imagination at Work, by Ben C. Clough. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1947, xix, 600.

Year by year, the shelf of anthologies devoted to folk legends and the tall-tale grows longer. More and more, Americans are taking an acute pride in searching out and bringing together examples of a people's literature that quite informally reveals the regional and national character and also reflects social movements. Mr. Clough, professor of Greek and Latin at Brown University, is as adept at gathering oral traditions and printed stories as George Bass is skilled at log rolling. And—like Bass—Clough seldom loses his footing to go tumbling into icy waters filled with churning chips of deceit and artificiality. No, Clough knows the real thing when he sees it, and his volume, for the most part, is as genuine as Uncle Sam.

The American Imagination at Work is divided into seven grand parts. (The mystic seven certainly must be partially responsible for the volume's success!) Each portion overlaps the others to some degree, but even so all possess individual unity and strength. Shrewdly, the author explores marvels and terrors; collects exaggerated tales of the wonders of nature; shows how good yarns grow bigger; dips his editorial hat deferentially to the world of the supernatural, although he doesn't let ghosts and goblins scare him; selects the outstanding whoppers of tall-tale America; pays tribute to America's men who were explorers, pioneers, benefactors, demigods, supermen, myth-makers, and jokers; and winds up with a flourish by recounting the hardy perennials—the favorite lies, hoaxes, and queer characters that always have amused a free people since they first took up the long rifle in defense of their rights.

There's a wonderful sense of youthfulness and optimism and an atmosphere of accomplishment here that certainly must renew faith in the democratic processes. Few folk anthologies reveal more clearly the virility of a people, or show their ignorances or foibles any more forcibly. Perhaps certain selections do not quite meet all the requirements of folk material and perhaps the editor has not always chosen the most apt example in a given category. But it is easy to carp about what a compiler did not chose for his collection. By and large, Mr. Clough has chosen well and wisely. It must be said, however, that he has included some stories that seem to fall more in the field of finished literature than in the domain of the unpolished narration of the people. It is rather sad—but certainly not tragic—that this volume devoted to the American imagination fails to include examples of outstanding contemporary folk literature—the rich imagery, for example, that the Second World War produced or the fine ballads of labor groups. Indeed, the ballad form is neglected. Mr. Clough, in addition, has paid little attention to the wonderful folk material that immigrant groups brought to America and that has been refined and transformed to harmonize with the

New World setting. But a single volume cannot include all, and what has been chosen has, in the main, been elected with consummate skill. The book is a distinguished contribution in its field, and it will be enjoyed by the general reader and relished by students. But this reviewer wonders if both groups will not question the accuracy of the rather unfortunate title which seems to place undue emphasis upon the claim that here is the *American* imagination at work. Many of the selections certainly reflect a very English imagination.

Philip D. Jordan

University of Minnesota

The Child's Book of Folklore, by Marian Vallat Emrich and George Korson, eds. The Dial Press, New York, 1947. xv, 240. \$2.75.

This comprehensive little volume of children's lore is, as the compilers themselves phrase it, *of, by, and for* children. *Of*, because it includes in its pages material that interprets the child-mind through his rhymes, songs, and games; *by*, because, in part, he has helped to make the book; and *for*, because the whole book is designed to stimulate the child to learn more about child-lore in America. In short, this book may serve as an introduction to folklore and guide the child, one of the stated aims of its editors, into "becoming a more active participant in the oral tradition."

There have been few, if any, books on the folklore of American children since Newell's *Songs and Games of American Children*, published in 1884. From then until now, most of such collections have been too often miscellaneous arrangements of children's lore, ostensibly *for* them, but seldom *of* them. Such books appear to have been compiled for the child's free reading, for reference, or for the use of the teacher in the school curriculum.

In contrast, the present publication has a unifying thread in its professed educational aim and in its presentation of examples representative of types of child-lore from various sections of the United States. The contents of the two books mentioned are similar. However, with its discussion of origins and parallels, Newell's study is primarily for the seasoned folklorist; the present volume is for the everyday child. In brief comments, introducing its several sections, the editors meet the child on his own level, with intimate conversational style and everyday phrases such as, "Believing in beliefs is fun!"

The Table of Contents is divided into five parts: Part One, "Folk Songs and Ballads," including favorites like "Billy Boy" and "Frog Went A-Courting," with music which has been carefully arranged for children. Part Two, "Beliefs and Customs;" Part Three, "Rhymes;" Part Four, "Games;" Part Five, "Folk Tales." In

selecting illustrative material for each section, the consideration of appeal to children has been one of the determining factors for inclusion. Most of the examples have been culled from printed sources with occasional oral material offered by the children themselves.

This book may be used by teachers and playground workers as well as by children. Some responsibility, it is probable, rests on the teacher to guide the child into a full appreciation of that into which he is being introduced. As a potential folklorist—or an amateur one—it would be of immense advantage to him to have it suggested that many of his beliefs, customs, rhymes and sayings are a part of his American heritage from England and the Continent. Also, parallels to such stories as "The Miner and the Deer" or "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story," both at the end of the book, might be pointed out with good effect.

In its appeal to juniors, one must not underrate the cunning black and white line-drawings, done by John O'Hara Cosgrave II, which give atmosphere to the text and relieve the monotony of an all-print page. In addition, the book-jacket is attractive in autumn colors of green and orange combined with black and white. Edited by parents who have worked with children, listened to their chatter and play, consulted their tastes and preferences, and acted on their suggestions, *The Child's Book of Folklore* appears not only educationally fit, but a contribution to a "minor but curious" (Newell) section in the whole field of folklore.

Grace Partridge Smith

Washington, D. C.

Witchcraft in England, by Christina Hole. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1947. 168. \$3.00.

Books about witches and witchcraft are many, and it is not easy to find anything new to say unless one is prepared to plunge into the sensationalism of a Montague Summers or the fantastic speculations of a Margaret Murray. The present book is a rational and on the whole sound description of the history of witchcraft in England, a sober presentation of familiar facts. Miss Hole skirts carefully round Miss Murray's Witch God; p. 25, she expresses scepticism—as well she might—about the latter's theory that in the Middle Ages the great mass of the people were pagans, worshipping a god whom Christians called the Devil, and that as late as the 17th century their beliefs formed a strong rival religion to Christianity. This sort of backwash from *The Golden Bough* still troubles the fringes of English anthropology and folklore study, and contributes to the English reputation for fantasy in scholarship. The present book is not immune; p. 53, the old whimsy about the fairies being a memory of a prehistoric dwarfish race, long since abandoned by serious scholars, is solemnly presented as "the most generally accepted theory."

There are here descriptions of the main beliefs and practices associated with witches through English history; of the lives of famous witches; and of some of the chief witch trials. English justice seems to have dealt relatively mildly with them on the whole, compared with Continental. Miss Hole gives the impression that the only method of execution was hanging, and avoids the question of how often witches were really burned. There are some notes on Hopkins the witch-finder, but one would like to see a study on his psychology, which should show curious results. Miss Hole describes well the historical side of the question, but devotes much less attention to the fact that many of these beliefs and practices are still held and carried on in rural England at the present time. Much might have been given from folklore sources, and the authoress, an authority on English folklore, could have done this very well. Thus the interesting black magic of the Witch Bone (known also in America) is barely mentioned. As for trials, the Alastair Crowley libel case, in our own day, is passed over in a few words. However, it is interesting to hear that there were several black witches in a single village in Somerset visited by Miss Hole in 1939.

This book makes no startling contributions, but is a fair and sensible study, readably written. The illustrations, by Mervyn Peake, seem meant to be bloodcurdling. They succeed only in being monotonous.

Kenneth Jackson

Harvard University

The Winged Serpent, an Anthology of American Indian Prose and Poetry, by Margot Astrov. The John Day Company, New York, 1946. xi, 366. \$3.50.

The title of this book—*The Winged Serpent*—remains without explanation, and it may be a misnomer. Nowhere is the Serpent the theme of a song, an incantation, a myth or a tale, such as abound here from cover to cover. Only in the dissertation (pp. 50, 51) does the snake or serpent figure incidentally as a power of the underworld linked with death and destruction, or as associated with water, rainbow, stars, and lightning; this, without reference to wings or plumes. Yet it might well have received better treatment, if only to justify the title, and if the repertory as quoted had embraced more fully the fundamentals, rather than confined itself in part to externals and geography (mostly the United States, and the work of some of its ethnographers).

The Feathered Snake, the Winged Serpent, the Dragon with one or several heads, the Vampire and the Maiden, the Monster Killed by the Suitor who liberates the Maiden, are all branches of one huge mythological tree. The growth of this tree lasted through the millenae; its ramifications in time spread from Asia to Europe and to

this continent. In America now it is no less familiar than elsewhere, among both the Indians and the white settlers. The Snake and the Thunderbird, the Monster (Grubworm, Caterpillar . . .) and the Sisiutl (single or double-headed), are outstanding features in the mythology and plastic arts of the North Pacific Coast; the Plumed Dragon and the Feathered Snake abound in the South West and in Mexico. All of them illustrate the same ancient cultural concept. They stand for other myths and folk themes, which are equally world-wide and symbolical, and have crisscrossed North and South America no less than Asia and Europe. For example: Bear Mother, Thunderbird (and Snake) and Prometheus or the Origin of Fire, Earth Mother, Janus (with two faces), the One-legged Giant, Jonah and the Whale, Samson (the reckless strong man), Pygmalion and Galatea, Orpheus and Eurydice (to use their classical names only), and a number of others.

When the author chose *The Winged Serpent* as a name for her anthology, she unwittingly led us to anticipate a discriminating selection of native prose and poetry, which she did not carry out, though it would have been preferable. Her choice at times verges on the bric-à-brac familiar in the shops of curio dealers and in the museums depending upon donations for their show cases. Native American culture and art (including literature) can still be presented as a monumental unit forming part of the endowment of humanity as a whole, and this in spite (or because) of its genetic core remaining as a whole outside our hemisphere.

For one whose field and habitat differs from that of the author, the centre of gravity of her book seems arbitrarily situated, both south and north of other fields equally significant and largely overlooked—Canada, Alaska, Greenland, Mexico, Central and South America. Nowhere in North America are native songs, lyric poetry, and mythology richer and more beautiful than among the Dènè-Athapascans, whose remote ancestry lies close to the highly cultured nomads of Siberia and Manchuria, to whom they have fallen heirs. The songs of the Sekanais, the Tahltan, in the Northern Rockies, those of the Tsimshyan, of the Interior Salish, may be unsurpassed on this continent. The French missionary Emile Petitot, for twenty years (in the 1860's and 1870's) among the Dènè, better than any other has recorded and revealed the epic nature of barbaric minds under the Arctic circle. And Thalbitzer has contributed a monograph on Eskimo songs which, better than any anthology, expressed the mind and humanity of man on the brink of frozen infinity. Yet hardly anything of all this, nor of Iroquoian lore, nor of North Pacific totemic narratives, figures in *The Winged Serpent*.

Perhaps the reviewer was prompted to adverse reactions by the statement on the jacket of the book, that here "for the first time there has been compiled an anthology worthy to rank beside those of other continents and races." For this effort is far from being the first or last word on the subject, nor is it the only one available,

in spite of its size, in a rather neglected domain. Dr. Spier's and Dr. Wissler's favourable comments, as also quoted on the jacket, are nonetheless justified, particularly if we consider only the native sources within the United States.

The introduction, the opening chapters on The Power of the Word, and The Influence of Christianity, constitute a valuable part of the book, although they are somewhat in the margin of the subject (pp. 3-72). The discussion of the essentials of a "collection made up of translations" like this anthology, is worth reading. Indeed, "translation is . . . a high art"; "A creative element has to enter into the process of transmuting an oral expression from" one language into another (p. 5). Yet the author's ambition fell short of fulfilment in a part of her selections here translated or expressed in faulty style. There is a world between the sublime interpretations of the Bible in English by John Wyclif, between the translations by Petitot of Dènè songs and myths, and the prosy renderings of some American anthropologists as quoted in this anthology. Here the poetic feeling and the lofty concepts are often blurred by such jargon as: "I would be allright" (p. 258); "I think about all the jobs" (266); the sister "has gotten into serious trouble" . . . "might do the same" (270); "I shall cry differently on your account" (280); "hand me the same" (297); "The second rule . . . clean that house at four o'clock in the morning" (clocks in "ancient Mexico"!); "Through the agency of a dream . . . , by the aid of his breath . . . , nothing existed indeed" (325); "Again investigated the bottom of the mystery" (325). Some mistakes in spelling should have been avoided like *Kagrantan* for *Kagwantan*; *Other-Water* for *Otter-Water* (J. R. Swanton, Tlingit, p. 289).

To end on a more cheerful note, this reviewer finds much to praise in the major part of this anthology. Inspired and poetic songs, myths, and tales, cannot fail to leave a lasting impression of beauty, grandeur, and often tragedy, on the reader who has come unprejudiced into this field of literature at the gates of prehistory.

Marius Barbeau

National Museum of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

The Doctor to the Dead, Grotesque Legends and Folk Tales of Old Charleston, by John Bennett. Rinehart & Company, New York and Toronto, 1946. xviii, 260. \$2.50.

Ghost Stories of Old New Orleans, by Jeanne deLavigne. Rinehart & Company, New York and Toronto, 1946. x, 374. \$3.50.

These two books are properly reviewed together for they have much in common. They must be analyzed, not as folklore, but as creative works which are more or less based on folklore, bearing the

same relationship to it as the historical novel bears to history. The emphasis in both is on tales of the supernatural and the grotesque and the settings are two of the South's most colorful cities, Charleston and New Orleans. In each book a style is developed which is consistent enough to give unity to a group of stories and flexible enough to meet the exigencies of the range of mood required by the tales.

Many of us who have had a finger in collecting American folklore have hoped for a greater utilization of it by creative artists capable of understanding its implications and its overtones to the end that we have a strengthening of our national cultural patterns. In many ways these two books will satisfy us: they are well written by authors who understand their milieu completely; the stories are imbedded in an atmosphere and a local history which form the warp of the books' fabrics. The results are often little masterpieces of storytelling art. But they are folkloristic rather than folklore.

Both authors indicate something of their sources. Mr. Bennett is more explicit on this point than Miss deLavigne. Speaking of the fragments upon which his stories are based,

"Sometimes all that remained was the emptied husks of a long-disintegrated tale. Of some only the beginning remained; of others, an end without a beginning. It was often necessary to assemble the fragments of an almost forgotten story, bit by bit, from spokesmen in widely separated social groups—housemaids, butlers, nurses, washerwomen, coachmen, stableboys, day laborers and fishermen. . . . These legends never had taken the shape of finished folk story, but fragments drifting from lip to lip, nebulous and inchoate. The writer therefore considered himself free to cast them in such finished forms as in his judgment seemed best calculated to convey to the reader the impression made upon his own mind by the amorphous, fragmentary tale, and in the style that seemed best calculated to preserve the unique character of each."

This is an honest statement of indebtedness and if my own experience with the folklore of the supernatural is a safe guide, he is quite right in his implication that the ghost tale as told in America is never so complete, never as embroidered in detail as those in his books. It is more often suggestive than comprehensive. Bennett has fulfilled his possibilities in each story.

The best of Bennett's stories is his title yarn, *Doctor to the Dead*, which must suggest Hawthorne more than the folk-teller, for it concerns a physician whose endeavor was to bring back the dead girl he had held in his passionate embrace long after her death. On the other hand, ghosts and the Devil glide in and out of the book with a wistful naturalness that reflects the folk origins of his work. The treatment is gentle and unhurried, graced with a tenderness for the

human race, dead or alive. That his informants were mostly Negroes whom he learned to know at a happily intimate level is not only made clear in his preface but is even more apparent in his stories.

Miss deLavigne is less specific about her sources, writing only that

"old newspaper accounts, interviews and neighborhood hearsay have been the source of the tales. It is possible that no one in this old city has ever been able to hear more than one or two of its ghost stories *in toto* before this presentation of them."

Even allowing New Orleans credit for a greater self-consciousness of what it owes to its restless dead than has Charleston, it would be safe to say that the author has followed the same method of utilizing her sources as Mr. Bennett. Offhand, however, it would seem that the long standing literary tradition which has recognized this local asset may have contributed to the greater variety and greater intensity of the book from New Orleans. There are ghosts—some lovely ones—and witchcraft, voodoo, pirates and buried treasure. Very often the emphasis falls on the events which preceded the death of the principal figures, rather than events involving their post-mortem returns. Love and passion, murder—some of those are lovely, too, in their own way—violence, hatred, and yearning loyalties motivate the tales, which are seasoned by all the racial and national groups who have flowed through New Orleans' colorful history.

This is a good pair of books and in each of them I found passages to cause the hair to stiffen on the nape of my tough old neck. Many voices and imaginations have contributed to these stories but the authors have made art forms out of folk fragments, which is, certainly, a legitimate use of such fragments.

Louis C. Jones

New York State Historical Association
Cooperstown, New York

FOLKSONG ON RECORDS

A Review of Recent Releases

The ballad singer had always been a performer, conscious of an audience and its tastes, motivated to some extent by the natural desire to please. If the folk singer is ordinarily faithful to his own text, he is probably not concerned with scholarly ideals. Variations large and small arise by accident or design; but they are judged by standards established within the tradition, and to a considerable degree they derive their sanction from an audience of peers. Thus ballad flux is inevitable, yet pressures and vogues are, as it were, self-contained so long as "the folk" are an entity.

I make this point because the contemporary ballad singer publicized on radio and phonograph is subject to an entirely different set of pressures. He is faced not with an audience of his peers, but with a heterogeneous mass schooled in the thirty-two bar chorus of standard "June:moon" content. Decisions of cultivated "musical directors" tend to take precedence even over the singer's own tastes, for the stakes are large, and audience approval must be instantaneous if it is to be won at all. The result is, not the disappearance of folk music, as has been predicted for a century, but an increasingly commercialized exploitation which is not always fortunate. Burl Ives once confessed to me that he was not free to sing as he pleased in a night club engagement; he was at the mercy of the dilute tastes of his audience, whom he had to "knock cold" with every ballad if he were to survive. Ives is surviving nicely, but his repertoire is narrowed from the days when he was an unknown choosing freely from his rich store of midwestern balladry. Many another singer has gone to distressing lengths to tailor materials which were never his own, and a general vulgarization process is too frequently apparent.

It is therefore refreshing to report that several recent issues of recorded folksong exhibit a commendable degree of responsibility. Among these is Frank Warner's *Hudson Valley Songs*¹ (Disc Album 611), containing eight selections from among the two-hundred odd which Warner recorded on a field trip "several years ago." Here the singing is all by Warner, accompanied by three or four instrumentalists (album notes and disc labels are inconsistent). The result is a pleasing performance, but it is regrettable that the voice of Yankee John Galusha and "Granny" Fish should be lost to us. Yankee John contributed "The Ballad of Blue Mountain Lake" to Warner's collection, as he had earlier sung it for Carl Carmer. Carmer's *The Hudson* (1939) devoted an appreciative chapter to the talented old lumberjack, and included a more faithful transcript of "Blue Mountain Lake" than the somewhat garbled text accompanying the album.

¹ Called also *Hudson Valley Ballads* (spine) and *Songs of the Hudson Valley* (inside cover).

Galusha's air is a modernization of "King John and the Abbot of Canterbury," more commonly known as "Derry Down." "Granny" Fish, whose capacious memory was made famous by Helen Hartness Flanders, sang more than a hundred songs for Warner, of which "The Bay of Biscay-O" and "The Jolly Roving Tar" were selected for inclusion here, although the sea ditty is not characteristic of her wide repertoire. Two notable Revolutionary War ballads still surviving in the Hudson Valley are among the chief treasures of this album: "The Ballad of Montcalm and Wolfe" (cf. an interesting variant in Harold W. Thompson's *Body, Boots and Britches*, pp. 323-4), and the rare "Ballad of the British Soldier," sometimes titled "The Dying Sergeant." A stirring version of "The Days of Forty-Nine" is in its raciness superior to the California survival to be found in *The Gold Rush Song Book* (1940). Erie Canal songs, two in number, are disappointing.

Independent recording firms have consistently taken the lead in the folksong field, but during the present year Decca, which owns also the Brunswick list, has made a strong bid with its inauguration of the American Folk Music Series, under the editorship of Alan Lomax. The first album in the series was Carl Sandburg's *Cowboy Songs and Negro Spirituals* (Decca A-356), sung in the poet's intimate individual style, but not a notable indigenous contribution. A recent addition to the series is *Listen to Our Story: A Panorama of American Ballads* (Brunswick B-1024), eight sides originally recorded as Brunswick or Vocalion "singles" in the late twenties by little-known ballad singers, not professional performers. "The Lady Gay," a variant of the American form of "The Wife of Usher's Well" (Child 79D), echoes the familiar melodic contours of a well-known "Barbara Allen" setting. The album also includes uncommercialized versions of "The Derby Ram," "Pretty Polly," "The Death of John Henry," a Civil War riverboat song "Rock About, My Saro Jane," a ballad-spiritual "Then You Will Need That True Religion," and a lyric of the notorious gambler "Stackerlee." The text of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," sometimes titled "Peggy Walker," is unusually full and sound. In this version, "The girl I left in old Texas had married another man," and the lover is stunned at the news:

I turned myself all around and about, not knowing what else to do;
I read on down a piece further to see if those words proved true.
It's drinking I throw over, card playing I resign,
For the only girl that I ever loved was the girl that I left behind.

Lomax has provided a useful "Sing-Along Book" containing words, airs with guitar chords, and impressionistic notes of popular character. Especially commendable is the practice of including the date of recording on each label, and one wonders why enough pressure hasn't long since been brought to bear upon recording companies to insure such basic information on every record. Rather cynically

manufacturers seem to date only such reissues as depend on age for their sales value.

Briefer Mention: Richard Dyer-Bennet's *Ballads and Folk Songs* (Keynote 108) is a diversified selection of songs by the popular British singer whose exploitation of folk materials has always seemed delicate and charming. Singing to his own lute accompaniment, Dyer-Bennet provides good settings of two Child ballads, "The House Carpenter" (No. 243) and "The Golden Vanity" (No. 286). The album also includes the racy "Charleston Merchant" and such familiar songs as "The Lincolnshire Poacher," "The Derby Ram," "Hullabaloo Belay," "What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor," and the recent Australian "Waltzing Matilda," here called "The Swag Man."

Susan Reed, a young singer barely out of her teens, has won a devoted following during three active years in New York. Now she has recorded two albums (Victor M-1086 and M-1107), largely from the repertoire of Ives, Dyer-Bennet and Niles, plus "favorites" of the order of "Danny Boy" and "My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose." Despite their popularity, the songs of Miss Reed are disappointingly projected, although the immaturity of effect may be due to unsympathetic recording engineers.

John Jacob Niles' *Early American Ballads* (Victor M-604), long out of print, has recently been re-issued. Despite their staginess, the superb settings of "My Little Mohee," "Barbara Allen," "The Seven Joys of Mary," and a handful of others, make this album a cornerstone for any collection. Another Niles album, *The Seven Joys of Mary* (Disc 732), issued late in 1946, contains the title song and "I Wonder as I Wander" (both in the earlier Victor album), and three other carols written by Niles for his young son. In his notes Niles describes again the circumstances under which he learned the memorable "I Wonder as I Wander" from the daughter of an itinerant evangelist, adding a detail not in his earlier account: he wrote all but the first stanza himself, and he smoothed the final two measures of music into the magical modal cadence now so familiar.

Claude M. Simpson, Jr.

The Ohio State University

FOLKLORE NEWS

Southeastern Folklore Society.—The following program was presented at the Folklore Section of the SAMLA meeting at Chattanooga, Tennessee, November 28:

"A Report on the Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore," Newman I. White, Duke University.

"On the Trail of Florida Folksongs," Alton C. Morris, University of Florida.

"Rustic Imagery in Mississippi Proverbs," Ernest H. Cox, University of Florida.

"Folklore in Southern Educational Film Production Service," Mrs. Nina C. Finn and Mr. William Clifford, Athens, Georgia.

The officers elected for the coming year are: Chairman, George Pullen Jackson, Vanderbilt University; Vice-Chairman, Edwin C. Kirkland, University of Florida; Secretary-Treasurer, Newman I. White, Duke University.

At an informal meeting members of the Southeastern Folklore Society decided that this group would hold a meeting next year in the headquarters hotel of the SAMLA and on the night before the SAMLA sessions begin.

Sacred Harp News.—The United Sacred Harp Musical Association held its annual three-day convention in the Municipal Auditorium, Atlanta, on September 12-14. Leading singers from Georgia, Florida, The Carolinas, Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi made up the Atlanta "class." This group holds informal suzerainty over all similar local and state groups in the South. George Pullen Jackson was elected chairman of the convention.

A sound film portraying the traditional singing institution connected with *The Sacred Harp* is now in its first stages of realization. Its production will probably be by the Southern Educational Film Production Service of Athens, Georgia. And for the authenticity of its historical and present-day aspects George Pullen Jackson will be responsible. The significance of this proposed film lies not alone in its material but also in the fact that it will be one of the first to make use of folklore for educational purposes. And its potential appeal to folklorists, musical people, schools and colleges, and students of social culture in general would seem assured.